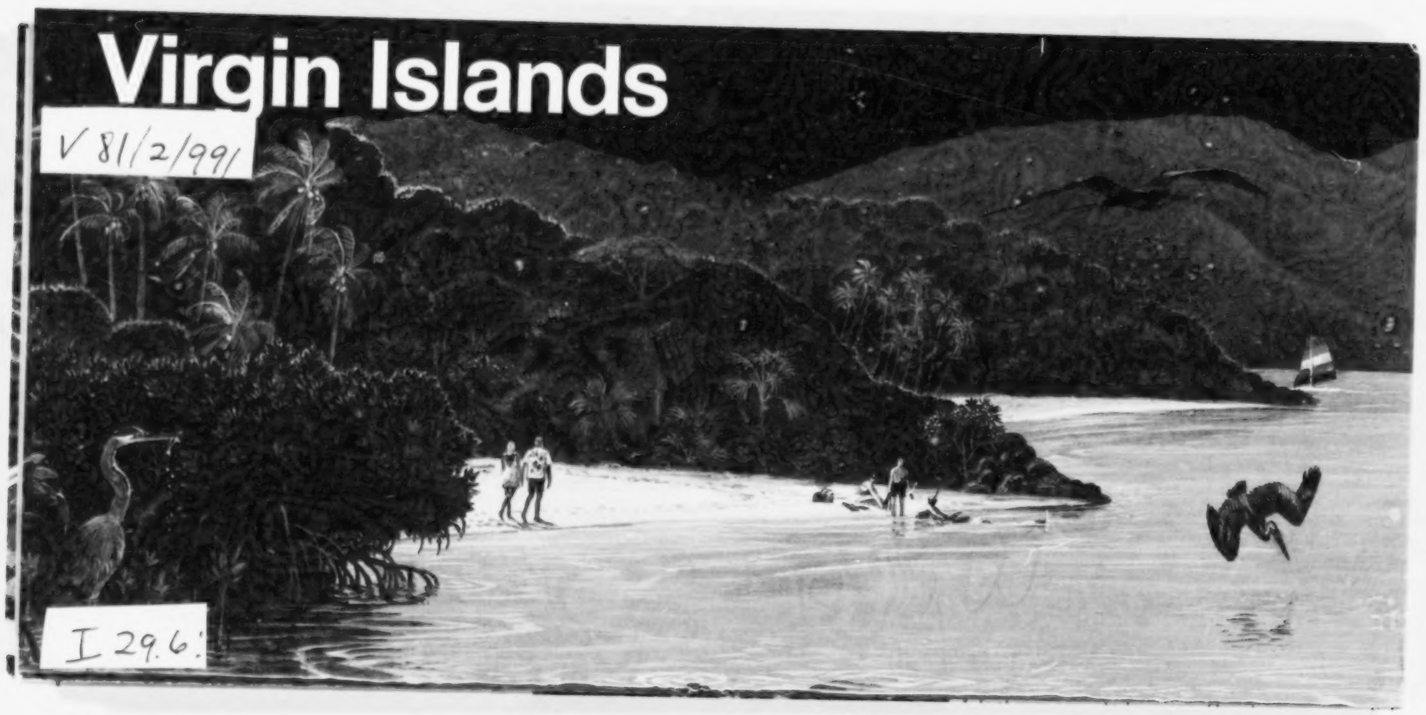
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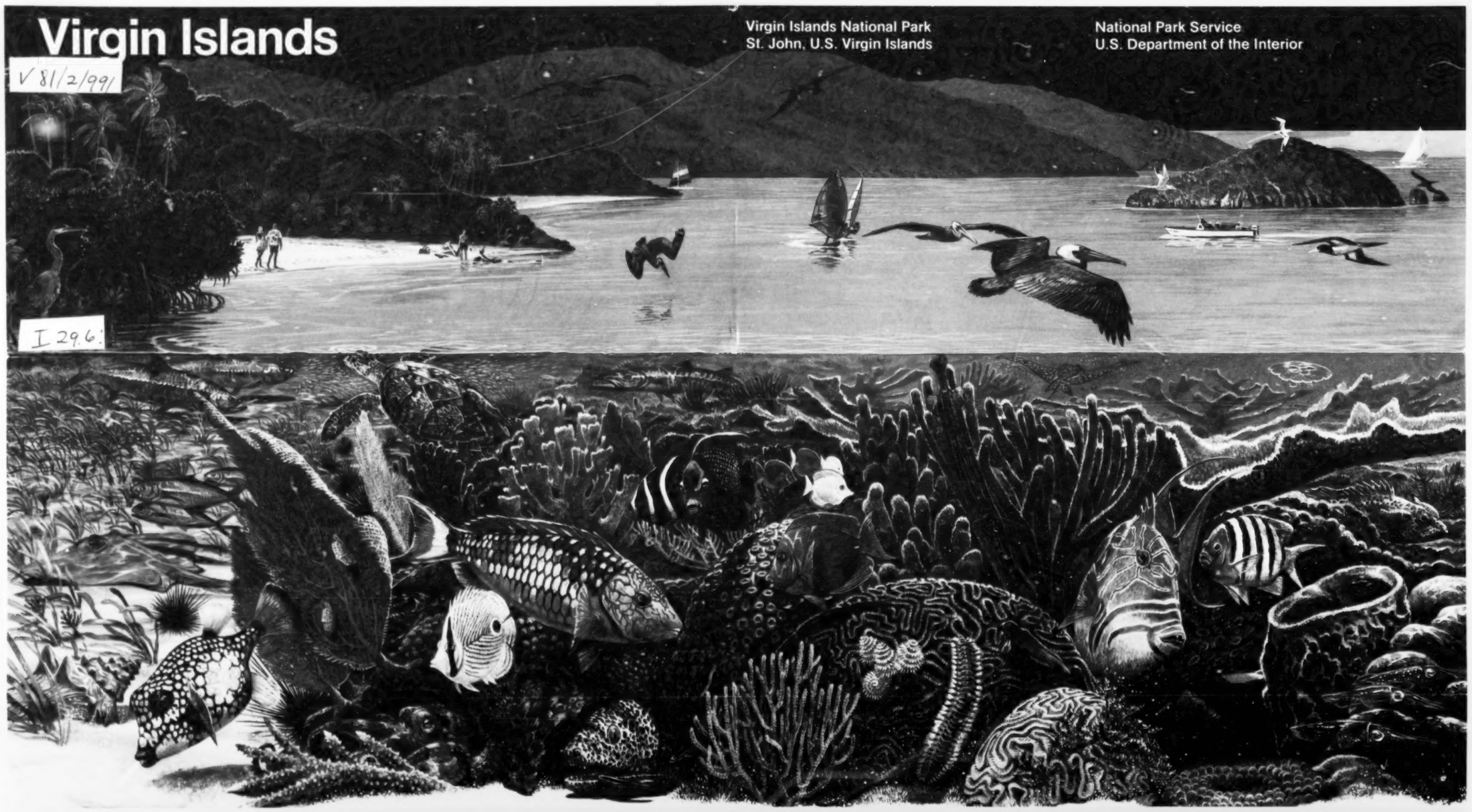
Virgin Islands

Virgin Islands National Park
St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



A Treasure Trove of Discoveries

Time is something to be ignored whon visiting Virgin Islands National Park. Pay no attention to your wristwatch; better yet, don't even wear one. Adjust yourself instead to St. John's slower pace. Forget about trying to cram too many things into your visit. Ignore this advice and you'll depart less enriched than those who have made a successful transition to "island time."

Rumor has it that pirates buried fortunes throughout this Caribbean area. Today's island visitors find treasures of greater value than gold and silver. Awaiting discovery are a wealth of beaches, coral reefs, plantation ruins, and diverse plants and animals. This national park is indeed a treasure trove filled to the brim. You will be rewarded!

Above Waterline
1 Great blue heron
2 Magnificent frigatebird (male)
3 Brown pelican
4 White-tailed tropicbird
5 Brown booby

Below Waterline
6 Seagrass bed
7 Shaving brush
8 Southern stingray
9 Queen conch
10 Smooth trunkfish
11 Long-spined black urchin
12 Tarpon
13 Sea fan
14 Flamingo tongue
15 Staghorn coral
16 Foureye butterflyfish
17 Stoplight parrotfish (adult)
18 Fire coral
19 Hawksbill turtle and Remora
20 Great barracuda
21 French angelfish (adult and juvenile)
22 Large star coral
23 Spotted moray with cleaning goby
24 Gorgonian
25 Blue tang (adult and juveniles)
26 Brain coral and Christmas tree worms
27 Fireworm
28 Pillar coral
29 Trumpetfish
30 Sea whip
31 Spotted eagle ray
32 Queen triggerfish
33 Bigeye
34 Sun anemone
35 Fairy basslet
36 Orange flower coral
37 Sergeant major
38 Elkhorn coral
39 Moon jelly
40 Rock hind with isopods attached to head
41 Basket sponge
42 Reef squid

The cover illustration by John Dawson depicts the rich wildlife of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Island of St. John

Throughout history, people seeking paradise on Earth have traveled—or dreamed of traveling—to a tropical island where they could find beauty, refreshment, and refuge. Today, just over half of the small rugged volcanic island of St. John is protected as a natural paradise within Virgin Islands National Park. Among the earthly delights of this faraway place are tropical forests, wildlife, wildflowers, and breathtaking views. Just offshore, dazzling natural riches are preserved within the park's marine areas. Combined, the land and waters of St. John are, in many ways, a world apart.

Don Kreuter

Bananaquit
The everpresent bananaquit is the official bird of the Virgin Islands. With its long, decurved bill, the bird feeds on the sweet nectar of tropical flowers.

Don Kreuter

Scurrying Lizards
Lizards scurry about day and night. Males extend colorful dewlaps and do push-ups as a part of territorial and courtship displays.

cal forest and much of the island's native wildlife are protected. The island's remarkable variety of over 800 species of plants includes the teyer palm, which is St. John's only native palm tree; the bay rum tree, whose aromatic leaves once provided the oil for the world-famous bay rum cologne; and rare, brilliantly colored wild orchids. St. John is a sanctuary for animals as diverse as corals, sea turtles, and reef fish; insect- and fish-eating bats; frogs; gecko, anole, and iguana lizards; and, of course, birds. More than 20 species of tropical birds breed on the island. They include the bananaquit, the black, parrot-like smooth-billed ani, and two species of Caribbean hummingbirds. Many warblers and other birds seen in the continental United States in the summer spend their winters in the dense forests. On St. John, island life can flourish, and does.

Like most Caribbean islands, the natural world of St. John has undergone tremendous, sometimes overwhelming, changes. Forests were cleared over almost all of St. John for sugar plantations, farms, and houses in the 1700s and 1800s. Foreign trees and shrubs, brought over to provide food or medicines, invaded the native forests, and, by the early 1900s, no sizable original stands were left. Animals, too, were introduced by man. Some, such as the weasel-like mongoose, which developed a taste for the eggs of ground-nesting birds and sea turtles, have had devastating effects.

But today, with an ample part of St. John's natural resources managed by the park, the tropi-

Only at Night
Largest of island blossoms, the vanilla-scented, night-blooming cereus is pollinated by bats and may be seen, true to its name, only at night.

Don Kreuter

A Richness in Plantlife
More than 800 species of trees, shrubs, flowers, and other plants grow in the different forests of St. John, from the moist subtropical forests of the interior mountains to the semi-arid cactus scrublands on south-facing slopes and rocky, windswept peninsulas. Inviting park trails wind through forests that today are a mix of native and introduced* species.

1 Strangler fig
2 Turpentine
3 Bromeliad
4 Bay rum
5 Teyer palm
6 Monkey-pistol, or Sandbox
7 Rock wall of former plantation
8 Kapok
9 Termite nest
10 Genip*
11 Pinguin, or wild pineapple
12 West Indian locust
13 Painkiller*
14 Wattapama
15 Overgrown sugar factory ruins
16 Pipe organ, or dildo cactus
17 Century plant
18 Salt pond with White-cheeked pintails
19 Turk's cap cactus
20 Sea grape

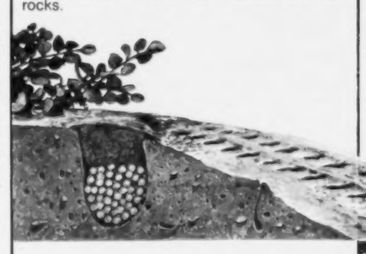
John Dawson

Beaches

The white sand beaches of the Virgin Islands have a well-deserved reputation for being among the most beautiful in the world. Picture-postcard beaches fringe Hawksnest Bay, Trunk Bay, Cinnamon Bay, Little Lameshur Bay, and many of St. John's other sheltered coves.

Sand—the key ingredient to any beach—is brought to the island's shore by waves, tides, and currents. Where does all that sand come from? Primarily from two sources within each bay—from marine algae that grow just offshore and from living coral reefs. Both, when broken down into tiny fragments, make sand. Without the algae and the reefs, the ready supply of sand would disappear, as would, in time, the beaches.

The reefs also act as the first line of defense for the beaches; they reduce the full force of incoming waves that otherwise would cause serious erosion. On stretches of St. John's rugged coast that lie exposed, and unprotected by reefs, the shoreline is made up of cobbles and bare rocks.



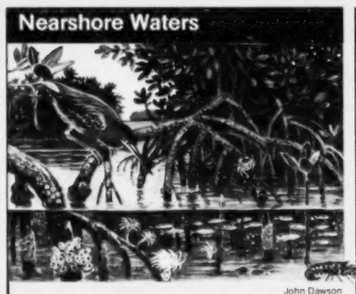
Sea Turtles
Two endangered sea turtles, the hawksbill and the green, are commonly seen in St. John's waters. The hawksbill, shown here, comes ashore on remote St. John beaches to dig its nest and lay eggs. After burying the eggs in the warm sand, the female returns to offshore waters. When the youngsters hatch, they instinctively turn toward the sea. Despite laws protecting them in numerous countries, they are still hunted in some areas for their shells and meat.

Except for sunbathers and swimmers, the beaches can appear to be lifeless. Not so. Sandpipers and other shorebirds visit the beaches and probe along the water's edge in the sand for small crabs, mollusks, and other burrowing creatures that live off morsels of food the waves bring in. Sea turtles, who spend most of their lives in tropical seas, visit beaches only occasionally, but when they do it is for a very important purpose—to lay eggs. Beaches are essential to the survival of these rare, critically endangered species.

Raymond Coleman

Migrating Thousands
A popular island riddle goes "Ah lib on lan' an' walk about. But always home in or out." Give up? It's the soldier crab, who takes up residence in abandoned shells, particularly those of the West Indian top shell whelk. Found all over the island, these crabs come down to the beach by the thousands in annual August migrations to breed and lay eggs at the water's edge.

Nearshore Waters

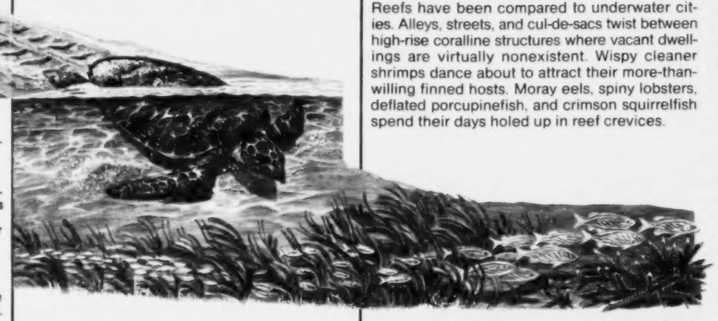


John Dawson

Mangrove Nurseries
The mangrove swamps of the park's coastal areas are a productive nursery for sea life. In turn, the young fish, juvenile lobsters, and other organisms that live in the maze of underwater mangrove roots provide meals for green herons, other birds, and large fish.

Edging parts of the island, between terrestrial and marine ecosystems, lie the ecologically important mangrove communities. Red mangroves, with their distinctive prop roots, occur in shoreline areas where reefs or bays afford protection from waves. Undersea meadows of seagrass beds also prefer these calmer waters.

Mangroves and seagrass beds provide food and shelter to an astonishing variety of organisms.



John Dawson

Schools of Grunts
French grunts are one of many reef fish that begin their lives hiding in seagrass beds, where they feed on crabs, shrimp, and marine worms. Adult grunts hover in huge schools over reefs by day, but each night they leave the safety of the reef to once again feed among the undersea grasses.

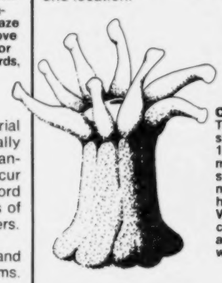
The submerged prop roots of the mangroves are encrusted with a colorful assortment of algae, tunicates, sponges, anemones, hydroids, barnacles, and oysters. Secure from predators, juvenile snappers, grunts, groupers, doctorfish, and sardines find shelter amidst the maze of roots. When larger, many of them venture out to spend the rest of their lives on the coral reef.

Turtle grass and manatee grass predominate in the seagrass beds. Their gently undulating blades provide food for sea turtles, fish, and sea urchins. Roaming throughout this area are such unusual animals as sea cucumbers, batfish, spotted eagle rays, goldspotted eels, and queen conch.

Coral Reefs

"Magical." "I always see something different." "Unbelievable colors and shapes." These are ways snorkelers and divers describe the fascinating underwater world of the coral reefs at Virgin Islands National Park. The kaleidoscope of changing colors, the variety of unusual shapes, the diversity of coral, fish, and other life combine to make the reef a priceless, never-to-be-forgotten experience.

Only by snorkeling can one enjoy what this marine wonderland has to offer. Be observant. Fish, lobsters, and feather duster worms disappear and reappear within mere seconds in one location!

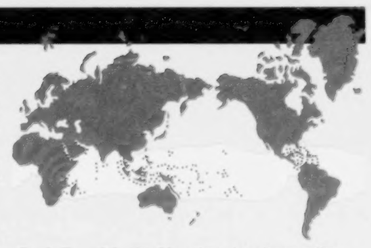


Coral City Builders
The tiny coral polyp, shown here at more than 1,000 times its size, is mostly soft stomach, stinging tentacles, and mouth surrounded by a hard limestone skeleton. Working together in huge colonies, these simple animals have built all the world's coral reefs.

Reefs have been compared to underwater cities. Alleys, streets, and cul-de-sacs twist between high-rise coralline structures where vacant dwellings are virtually nonexistent. Wispy cleaner shrimps dance about to attract their more-than-willing finned hosts. Moray eels, spiny lobsters, deflated porcupinefish, and crimson squirrelfish spend their days holed up in reef crevices.

At night, the city is transformed into an eerie nether world where octopuses slither about and parrotfish seek protection resting in their veil-like mucus cocoons. Coral polyps emerge from stony skeletal homes, stretching their tentacles out to feast on plankton.

Throughout both day and night, lacy-looking sea fans, sea whips, sea plumes, and other soft corals undulate in the current. They create the appearance of an underwater garden, but nothing could be further from the truth. This is a garden that cannot afford even the slightest dam-



Reefs Round the World
Coral reefs, shown in red, grow in tropical waters, shown in blue, where the sea temperature is more than 70°F throughout the year. Many are unprotected and face destruction from pollution, sedimentation, anchors, and overfishing.

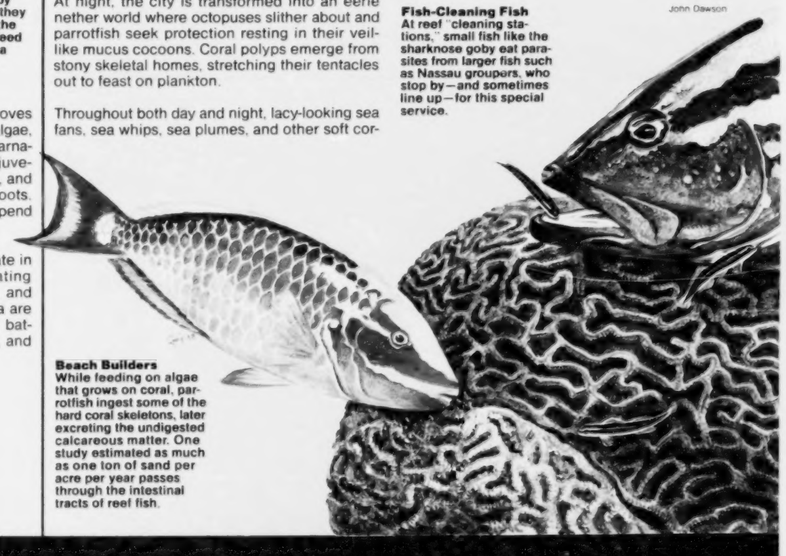
Don Kreuter

Snapping Shrimp
Anything but silent, the underwater world is punctuated by many sounds. Seeking protection at the base of a ringed anemone, the red snapping shrimp defends its home and stuns prey by snapping its enlarged claw to make a pistol-like sound easily heard by snorkelers.

age. The fastest growing corals add only two to three inches of growth per year, and large brain corals are hundreds of years old. Carelessly placed anchors, an errant flipper, and excessive sediments running off newly cleared slopes can devastate reef life. Virgin Islands National Park preserves what is fast becoming a disappearing natural phenomenon worldwide.

John Dawson

Fish-Cleaning Fish
At reef "cleaning stations," small fish like the sharknose goby eat parasites from larger fish such as Nassau groupers, who stop by—and sometimes line up—for this special service.

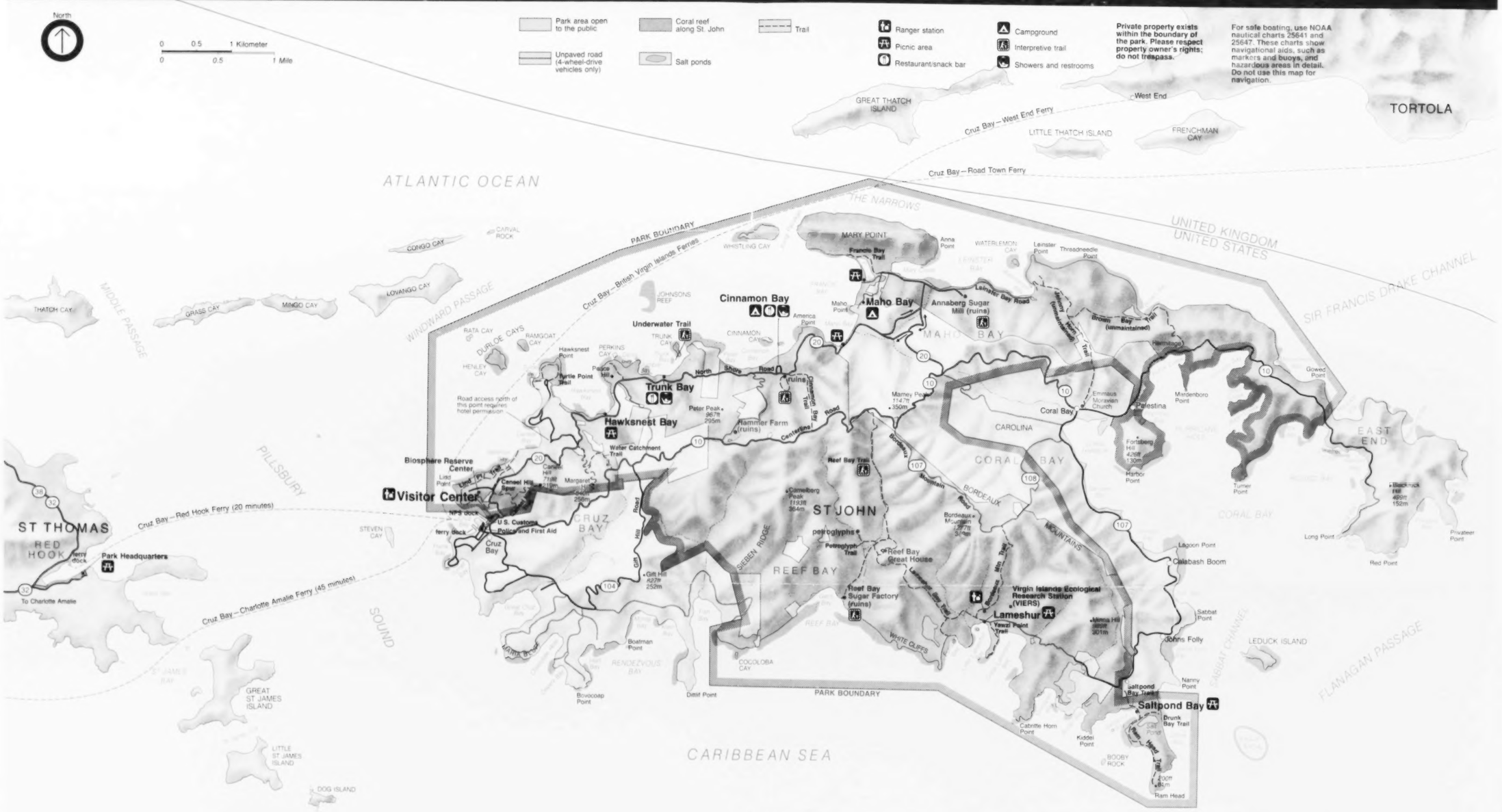


Beach Builders
While feeding on algae that grows on coral, parrotfish ingest some of the hard coral skeletons, later excreting the undigested calcareous matter. One study estimated as much as one ton of sand per acre per year passes through the intestinal tracts of reef fish.

Virgin Islands

Virgin Islands National Park
St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Park Travel Advisory Visitors to Virgin Islands National Park and the island of St. John should be aware of a few park regulations and safety tips (see list below) and a few local customs. Private property exists both within the park boundary and adjacent to it. Please respect land owners' rights: don't trespass. On St. John, and throughout the Virgin Islands, the rules of the road call for driving on the left side. The park's mountain roads are narrow and winding; drive carefully and observe speed limits. For safe boating, do not rely on this map. Use NOAA nautical charts 25641 and 25647, which show navigational aids and hazardous areas, such as coral reefs, in detail. Watch out for other boats and swimmers. Divers and snorkelers are required to fly a standard diver's flag; stay 100 feet away. If you plan to go to the British Virgin Islands, carry your passport or birth certificate; you'll need it to pass through customs. And remember, an island courtesy includes greeting others with a cheerful "Good-day!"

U.S. Virgin Islands

America's Paradise

Each of the three main U.S. Virgin Islands has its share of year-round tropical pleasures. **St. John,** where Virgin Islands National Park is located, is the least developed. Next door is the bustling tourist mecca of **St. Thomas**, with its magnificent cruise-ship harbor of Charlotte Amalie. And on distant **St. Croix,** life moves at a leisurely pace amid quaint towns, rolling hills, and pastoral landscapes.

Getting Here Major airlines fly from the U.S. mainland to St. Thomas and St. Croix; flights also land in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where connecting flights can be taken. Many cruiselines serve the islands.

Island Hopping Passenger ferries run between Cruz Bay, St. John, and St. Thomas (as well as the British Virgin Islands); see large map for routes. The Red Hook ferry runs hourly from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.; the Charlotte Amalie ferry runs less often. Water taxis also can be arranged. Frequent flights connect St. Thomas with St. Croix.

Area Services and Accommodations Car, jeep, and motorbike rentals are available on the islands. Taxis and "safari" buses operate from Charlotte Amalie to Red Hook on St. Thomas. Land, sea, air, and underwater tours are given, and boats and snorkeling and scuba gear may be rented. Other major services, including medical care, are available. Lodging ranges from campgrounds to luxury hotels; make reservations well in advance. The peak visitor season is December through April.

Other National Parks Christiansted National Historic Site preserves picturesque architecture of Christiansted, St. Croix, as it was in the 1700s and 1800s when these islands were a colony of Denmark. Daytrips to the remote island and coral reefs of Buck Island Reef National Monument north of St. Croix can include snorkeling, glass-bottom boat tours, and hiking. For information, write these parks at P.O. Box 160, Christiansted, St. Croix, VI 00820.

Information For further information about the park, write Virgin Islands National Park, 6010 Estate Nazareth #10, St. Thomas, VI 00802-3406. For general information, including lodging services, write Virgin Islands Division of Tourism, P.O. Box 200, St. John, VI 00831, or call (809) 776-6450.

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Virgin Islands National Park and St. John

More than half of St. John is national park land; the rest is small towns, shops, homes, and undeveloped territorial or private lands. The park also includes much of the offshore waters.

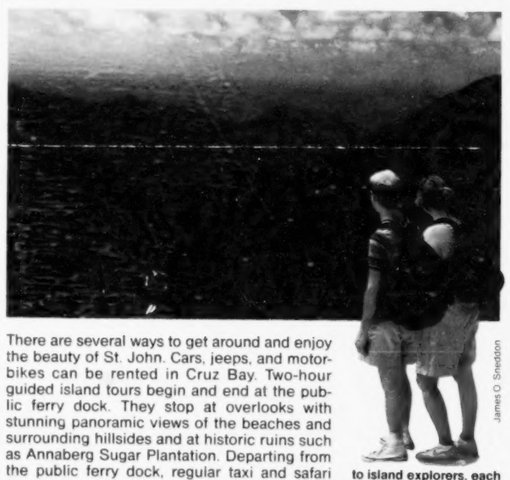
Touring the Park

Only a five-minute walk from the public ferry dock, **Cruz Bay Visitor Center** is open daily from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The ideal place to start your park explorations, the center contains exhibits, a park video, brochures, maps, and books. Park rangers can help plan your visit, which may include guided island hikes, historical tours, snorkeling trips, cultural craft demonstrations, and evening campground programs. Advance registration and transportation fees are required in some cases; schedules are available and program reservations may be made at the visitor center.

A Different Time Adjusting to "island time" is more than just a change in attitude. The Virgin Islands are in the Atlantic standard time zone. In winter, this means the time here is one hour later than eastern standard time. In summer, when the continent goes on daylight savings, the time becomes the same.

Medical Assistance Emergency medical services are available 24 hours a day; call 922 for help.

Many Points of View Numerous roadside pull-outs compete for the "best of the best" award;



James O. Sheddon

to island explorers, each panorama seems more spectacular than the last. The scent of bay rum trees at higher elevations such as Bordeaux Mountain, elevation 1,277 feet, recall a time earlier this century when the leaves were harvested to produce St. John's famous Bay Rum Oil. Breathtaking views of the British Virgin Islands may be enjoyed from Centerline Road (Route 10).

There are several ways to get around and enjoy the beauty of St. John. Cars, jeeps, and motorbikes can be rented in Cruz Bay. Two-hour guided island tours begin and end at the public ferry dock. They stop at overlooks with stunning panoramic views of the beaches and surrounding hillsides and at historic ruins such as Annaberg Sugar Plantation. Departing from the public ferry dock, regular taxi and safari bus transportation is available to north shore beaches.

Beaches Beautiful St. John's beaches are ideal for sunbathing, and the clear turquoise waters are a fantasy come true for swimmers and snorkelers. The beach at **Trunk Bay** is one of the most beautiful in the world. Facilities include an underwater snorkeling trail, bathhouse, snack bar, souvenir shop, and snorkel gear rentals. **Cinnamon Bay** has a water sports center that rents snorkel gear and windsurfers and can arrange day sailing, snorkeling, and scuba diving lessons and excursions. Call (809) 776-6458 for more information. **Hawksnest Bay** has change rooms and is the closest park beach within driving distance of Cruz Bay. Lifeguards are on duty daily at Trunk Bay and Cinnamon Bay. Roads and trails lead to other, more remote beaches. Several picnic areas are located on beaches around the island. Each has tables, grills, and restrooms.

Underwater Explorations The Virgin Islands rank as one of the Caribbean's premier diving and snorkeling locations. Trunk Bay has a 225-yard, self-guiding snorkeling trail marked by underwater signs that identify coral reef life. Fish can appear tame, but please do not feed them; they will live a healthier life by maintaining a normal diet. Several dive shops rent snorkel and scuba gear and run trips to offshore reefs.

Rock carving

Sugar Ruins You can walk through sugar plantation ruins at Annaberg on Leinster Bay Road; at Hammer Farm just off Centerline Road; and at Cinnamon Bay. See map above for locations.

Boating and Sailing The U.S. and British Virgin Islands contain a multitude of hidden harbors, beaches, and dive spots to cruise and explore. Charter operations provide excursions lasting from a half day to several weeks, power or sail, crew or uncrewed "bare-boat." Caneel Bay, Francis Bay, and Maho Bay are popular anchorages for overnight stays. Anchor in sand well away from coral and seagrass beds, or use mooring buoys where provided (fee charged). Living aboard a boat within park waters is limited to 14 days in any 12-month period. Powerboats may be rented in Red Hook on St. Thomas. Contact the park for a copy of the Boater's Guide with more details.

Fishing Park waters are open to fishing with hand-held rods. Fishing is not allowed in all of Trunk Bay and in buoy-designated swimming areas. Possession of spearguns within the park is prohibited. For world-class deep sea fishing, charter boats are available in Red Hook, St. Thomas.

Hiking Trails range from easy walks to difficult climbs, from well-maintained to brushy. Obtain a trail guide at the park visitor center. Guided park hikes of Reef Bay Valley (five hours) provide opportunities to visit mysterious-in-origin petroglyph rock carvings and the ruins of St. John's last active sugar mill. During the winter months especially, the Francis Bay Trail is an excellent place to go birdwatching for such species as the West Indian whistling-duck, yellow-billed cuckoo, and some of the other more than 160 species known to these islands. While hiking, please stay on trails and do not climb on ruins. Wear loose clothing to protect yourself against sunburn, insects, and thorny vegetation. Insect repellents are helpful against mosquitoes and sand flies.

Facilities and Services

Campgrounds Camping is restricted on park land to Cinnamon Bay Campground. Accommodations include bare tent sites, sites with tent-covered platforms already set up, and cottages. Prepared sites and cottages are equipped with cooking supplies and linens. There is also a camp store with food, other supplies, and a cafeteria. Reservations can be made by writing Cinnamon Bay Campground, P.O. Box 720, St. John, VI 00831, or by calling (809) 776-6330 or (800) 223-7637. Maho Bay Campground is a privately run camp with "tent-cabins" containing cooking supplies. Facilities include a camp store and central dining area where meals are served. For more information, write: Maho Bay Campground, P.O. Box 310, St. John, VI 00831, or by calling (809) 776-6226 or (800) 392-9004.

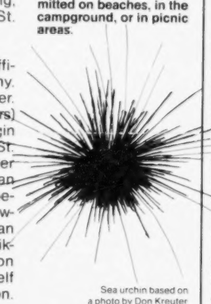
Island Accommodations and Services Besides the two campgrounds, St. John has a range of accommodations to fit any budget: guest houses, homes for rent, and exclusive beach resorts such as Caneel Bay, built by Laurance Rockefeller among the ruins of an old Danish sugar plantation. Cruz Bay has grocery stores, restaurants, gasoline stations, marina, post office, bank, laundry, Immigration and Customs, police station, and first aid clinic. It's a good place to stock up on food, drinks, and other supplies before heading out into the park. Several picnic areas are located on beaches around the island. Each has tables, grills, and restrooms. **Call 922 on the telephone for emergency medical services.**

Safety Precautions and Regulations The tropical sun can be a delight and a curse at the same time. Protect yourself from overexposure by using sunscreen lotion and by wearing hats and T-shirts. If you burn easily, remain indoors or in the shade between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Some plants, such as manchineel, are poisonous and can cause rashes or are toxic. Do not touch or taste unfamiliar plants.

Despite their innocent appearance, wild donkeys can bite and kick; please do not feed them.

Pets must be leashed at all times; they are not permitted on beaches, in the campground, or in picnic areas.



Sea urchin based on a photo by Don Kreuter

Large, shore-breaking waves—especially in winter on the North Shore—are dangerous; they are the park's greatest cause of injuries. Use extreme caution when entering or leaving water when surf is high. Do not bodysurf and never swim alone. For your own and the reef's protection, do not stand on reefs, touch or scrape coral and other marine life when snorkeling or scuba diving. Nasty, slow-to-heal cuts may result.

Scuba diving is not permitted off designated swim beaches.

Waterskiing and the use of jet skis are prohibited in park waters.

Beach fires are prohibited.

Norbert Wu

Defacing, breaking, or removing any natural or historical features on the island or in the water is prohibited. Do not climb on structure ruins; they crumble easily and can cause serious injury.

Lock valuables in your car or take them with you.

It is illegal to dump litter in park waters or on land.

St. John's Historical Heritage

MAPes MONDe Collection

Carib Warrior The Caribs pursued and enslaved Arawak Indians while extending their territory from South America through the Lesser Antilles. In 1493, during his second voyage, Columbus skirmished with Caribs in the waters off St. Croix. He found St. Thomas and St. John uninhabited.

A Cultural Crossroads

The nearly five centuries of the Virgin Islands' cultural history is as colorful and enthralling as a carnival parade. Humans inhabited the area long before Columbus' arrival. Archeological discoveries show that Indians, migrating northward in canoes from South America, lived on St. John as early as 710 BC. They hunted and gathered foods primarily from the sea. Like most of its Caribbean neighbors, the island later (c. AD 300) supported a small population of Arawak Indians who chose sheltered bays for villages, made pottery, and practiced agriculture.

Columbus may have named the islands, but no lasting settlements were in place until the 1720s. Attracted by the lucrative prospects of cultivating sugar cane, the Danes took formal possession in 1694 and raised Danish colors in 1718, thereby establishing the first permanent European settlement on St. John at Estate Carolina in Coral Bay.

Rapid expansion followed, and by 1733 virtually all of St. John was taken up by 109 cane and cotton plantations. As the plantation economy grew, so did the demand for slaves. Many who were captured in West Africa were of tribal nobility and former slave owners themselves. In 1733, they revolted and an island-wide massacre of families occurred. Six months passed before the rebellion was quelled.

The emancipation of slaves in 1848 was one of several factors that led to the decline of St. John's plantations. The population plummeted, and by the early 20th century cattle and subsistence farming and bay rum production were the main industries.

A Century of Change "Of white people there are only a Danish official who is stationed there as a local judge and Chief of Police, and a few missionaries, who attend to the spiritual welfare of the 900 negro inhabitants of the island." Not long after this 1900 report, St. John graduated from a sleepy out-of-the-way map dot to a place very much in the public eye. The United States purchased the islands in 1917, and by the 1930s the seed of a tourism industry had sprouted. Word spread quickly of this untouched Caribbean paradise. In 1956, Rockefeller interests purchased land and transferred it to the Federal Government to be designated a national park. In 1962, boundaries were enlarged to include 5,650 acres of submerged lands.

Eastern National Park & Monument Association

Annaberg Sugar Mill Remnants of the windmill, horse mill, and factory buildings tell the story of sugar production at Annaberg.

Planning for the Future Today the park works closely with local and Caribbean-wide conservation-minded interests to preserve the area's natural and cultural resources. In recognition of the significance of its natural resources, the park also is a part of the international network of biosphere reserves. As the future unfolds, both the park and Territory will strive to insure the preservation of America's Paradise.

St. Croix Landmarks Society

At Work and Play Some lifeways disappear while others persist. Sugar cane (left) is no longer harvested on St. John though it is on some islands. A few St. Johnians still make traditional market baskets out of hoop vine (above). Steel bands, mocko jumbies (right), and other masqueraders celebrate "mas" each July 4 during St. John's dazzling carnival parade.